



"What does Obama want of me?" Anxiety and Jade Helm 15

Calum Matheson

To cite this article: Calum Matheson (2016): "What does Obama want of me?" Anxiety and Jade Helm 15, Quarterly Journal of Speech, DOI: [10.1080/00335630.2016.1155127](https://doi.org/10.1080/00335630.2016.1155127)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00335630.2016.1155127>



Published online: 03 Mar 2016.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



"What does Obama want of me?" Anxiety and Jade Helm 15

Calum Matheson

Department of Communication, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA, USA

ABSTRACT

This article reclaims the concept of anxiety for rhetoric and demonstrates the usefulness of doing so by examining reactions to the Jade Helm 15 military training exercise. Following Lacan's recently translated seminar on Anxiety, the essay argues on behalf of a conceptualization of anxiety as a result of affective investments in a network of discourse rather than an individual feeling. This rearticulation of anxiety has implications for both rhetorical theory and criticism as well as practical responses to right-wing conspiracy theories such as those surrounding Jade Helm.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 10 October 2015
Accepted 12 February 2016

KEYWORDS

Anxiety; psychoanalysis; Jade Helm; conspiracy theories; fantasy

In the spring of 2015, the United States Department of Defense announced a major military exercise slated to take place across a number of southwestern American states. The stated purpose of the exercise, called Jade Helm 15, was to provide Special Forces units realistic training in diverse environments so they might be better prepared to "protect the nation against foreign enemies."¹ Soon after the announcement, an official PowerPoint file about the exercise began circulating online. Texas, Utah, and an "insurgent pocket" in Southern California were labeled "hostile." California, Colorado, and Nevada were labeled "permissive," while Arizona and New Mexico were "uncertain." A crude logo for the exercise included the ominous phrase "master the human domain" written below a graphic of crossed arrows and a dagger.² From the moment that it became public knowledge, Jade Helm proved rich soil for all manner of conspiracy theories. One of the most frequently asserted was that Walmart closings in Texas and other states were evidence that the Obama administration intended to establish Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) detention camps in preparation for martial law.³ Other theories alleged that in addition to preparing the way for martial law, Jade Helm was preparation for an asteroid collision,⁴ a nuclear war,⁵ and *Terminator*-style control by artificial intelligence.⁶ Naturally, extraterrestrial influence was alleged.⁷ Above all, Jade Helm prompted extreme concern for many on the far right not because it constituted clear evidence for any of these plots, but because it was not transparent enough to *exclude* any of them. As one right-wing commentator wrote, "the vast majority of us cannot know what the true intention of Operation Jade Helm might really be."⁸ Jade Helm suddenly loomed large and threatening.

Although the first conspiracy theories were largely hatched and incubated online (notably on Alex Jones' outlet, Infowars.com), suspicion about Jade Helm was not confined to fringe Internet groups for long. Celebrities and mainstream political figures joined right-wing commentators, survivalist websites, local newspapers, and talk radio hosts in expressing their uneasiness about the exercise. Although his original stance was mild, the rising tide of suspicion motivated Texas Governor Greg Abbott to order Texas State Guard units to "monitor" the exercise in response to increasing public pressure.⁹ Even honorary Texas Ranger Chuck Norris warned readers of his "culture warrior" column that the government could not be trusted.¹⁰

One of the most striking reactions came on the sixth of May in the form of an official statement from Congressional Representative Louie Gohmert (R-TX). Claiming on his website that his constituents were "legitimately suspicious" due to the Obama administration's attempt to "persecute" Christians, conservatives, and patriots, Gohmert questioned the "hostile" label applied to Texas and called for a change in Jade Helm's naming practices so that the federal government would not be "intentionally practicing war against its own states."¹¹ Neither the president nor any specific plot was ever mentioned by name. Gohmert's statement instead conveyed concern and uncertainty about the administration. Many likely voters shared Gohmert's concerns. In one Rasmussen poll, forty-five percent of respondents feared that military exercises provided cover for an increase in federal control over some states.¹² In fact, Jade Helm accusations were so widespread that NASA, Walmart, and the Army all felt compelled to respond to the various accusations made against them.¹³

Still, the situation in Texas was far from straightforward. Another poll revealed that over seventy-five percent of conservative Texans worried about Jade Helm distrusted the federal government; at the same time ninety-one percent retained a favorable view of the military, a tool ostensibly in its control.¹⁴ Republican presidential candidate Ted Cruz applauded efforts to monitor Jade Helm, telling Bloomberg News that his campaign would seek answers from the Department of Defense.¹⁵ Just a few short weeks later, however, Cruz vocally supported federal relief for victims of flooding in Texas despite the longstanding suspicion amongst conspiracy theorists of all stripes of FEMA and its supposed complicity in the Walmart detention-camp operation.¹⁶ Cruz's seemingly contradictory desire for both small government and federal intervention was not unique. Suspicion and trust coexisted in a complex, paradoxical political mood shot through with uncertainty and fear.

A common label for this convoluted mesh of feelings is *anxiety*. Those who worried about Jade Helm but could not provide any solid evidence of conspiracy were often described as "anxious." Like "paranoia," "neurosis," and "OCD," anxiety is a term that has migrated from the professional discourse of psychology into more general popular usage. "Anxiety" commonly refers to an individual feeling of worry about the future manifested in physical symptoms of distress. Because it has no specific object anxiety is distinguished from fear.¹⁷ Once a standard topic for scholars of rhetoric interested in the pedagogy of public speaking, the term is now mostly used in passing to describe group attitudes.¹⁸ It is not immediately clear, however, that a condition understood to be an *individual feeling* can be scaled up to describe a political mood such as that surrounding Jade Helm. How do sweaty palms and knots in the stomach correspond with the mood of a Texas town hall meeting or a strident right-wing Facebook group? How does the

concept of anxiety help to explain the conditions that made statements like Louie Gohmert's possible, and how might rhetorical critics interpret them? Jesse Walker's op-ed on Jade Helm in the *Los Angeles Times* argued that "a story . . . can tell us something *true* about the anxieties of the people who believe and repeat it."¹⁹ Was he right?

In this article I propose a reinterpretation of anxiety as an inherently rhetorical phenomenon arising from networks of affective investment, mediated by symbols, which disrupts the conditions of enjoyment for a subject's fantasies. This explanation of anxiety is aided by a new translation of psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan's seminar on the topic. Because anxiety has to do with uncertainty about the desire of the Other (the Symbolic order which makes communication possible), it is inherently tied to language and the operations of trope.²⁰ Anxiety also depends on a particular relationship to fantasy and the breakdown of language, which are linked respectively to Lacan's orders of the Imaginary and Real. To make these intersections clearer, I will begin with a brief discussion of psychoanalytic work in rhetoric focused on these three orders. I will then briefly review previous work on anxiety done by rhetorical scholars and advance an alternative understanding of the concept before putting it to use for an analysis of Louie Gohmert's statement on Jade Helm and the survivalist fantasy that is its context. Finally, I will argue that this revised theory of anxiety has implications for rhetorical criticism and political practice more broadly, particularly in efforts to understand conditions that may turn anxious fantasies into outright violence.

Psychoanalysis and rhetoric

Developing a new approach to anxiety in rhetoric requires an explanation of the three Lacanian "orders" of human experience: the Symbolic, Imaginary, and Real. As I will argue throughout this essay, anxiety itself is made possible by their intersection. The Symbolic is the economy of discourse, the set of signifiers that are both distinguished from one another and linked together by the operations of trope, primarily metaphor and metonymy. Subjects are defined in the Symbolic, but the entry into language is also an alienating process that establishes the conditions for desire (the lack).²¹ The Imaginary is the order of identification and fantasy governing how subjects are formed and develop their relationship to the lost object (*objet a*), the lack in subject formation that sustains desire. The Real is less the order of mind-independent existence than its eruption into the Symbolic, effecting the fissures and tears in the Symbolic that reveal everyday reality as a product of artifice. The Symbolic might be understood as the structure of an equation, the Imaginary relation lending particular value to individual variables, and the Real emerging when the formula is revealed to be insoluble.

Although the three orders are interrelated, scholars have focused on one order over the others to develop a psychoanalytic vocabulary useful for rhetoric. Barbara Biesecker's foundational essay "Rhetorical Studies and the 'New' Psychoanalysis" argued for the importance of the Real. Biesecker identified the "desiring subject" as what distinguishes psychoanalysis from a poststructuralist approach in which "everything is discourse." "Everything is not discourse," she wrote, "there is the real."²² Writing about the controversy over the Smithsonian's *Enola Gay* exhibit, Biesecker argued that the fact of its appearance in the late 1990s was no accident, but instead marked an imaginary response to the belief that the age of the Symbolic was being supplanted by a postmodern age of the

Real. The attendant “lack of a symbolic mandate,” “erosion of identity,” and “demise of desire” constituted for her “Lacan’s very definition of anxiety.”²³ Over a decade later, Bie-secker explored the importance of the Real for an “evental rhetoric” capable of revealing the limits of the Symbolic, and, thus, constituting a pathway towards “full speech” as theorized by Lacan.²⁴

More recently, in their dialogue Joshua Gunn and Christian Lundberg struggle over the importance of the Imaginary (Gunn) and Symbolic (Lundberg) in rhetorical studies. In “Refitting Fantasy: Psychoanalysis, Subjectivity, and Talking to the Dead,” Gunn makes a case for reevaluating Lacan’s “fundamental fantasy” as a response to the “poststructural critique of mediation that jettisons the Self-Other relation central to rhetorical studies,” an alternative that accounts for the persistence of agency and better explains the “interpersonal dynamics of suasive encounters.”²⁵ Fantasy, Gunn argues, is a product of identification and the imaginary relationship between a subject and its object. In response, Lundberg takes issue with Gunn’s approach, indicting it for “framing the Imaginary as a primary mode of inquiry.”²⁶ Rhetorical scholarship, Lundberg insists, will be most enabled by an emphasis on trope—understood not primarily as an operation taking place at the level of the imaginary (the site of fantasy) but, instead, as the constitutive element of the Symbolic economy through which subjects are formed and meaning becomes possible. “By confronting the Symbolic and restoring its primacy in Lacanian interpretation,” Lundberg writes, “rhetoricians can draw on Lacan’s suggestive use of specifically rhetorical thematics, especially in terms of tropology.”²⁷ Lundberg’s own work has since attempted to “restore” the Symbolic to a primary position by accounting for individual texts and their public effects through an “economically figured practice for reading trope.”²⁸ As one reviewer summarily put it, Lundberg’s project “urges rhetorical critics to forego their investment in the Imaginary as the site of ‘the agential capacities of the orator, the audience and . . . the critic’” and instead focus on “a conception of ‘speech’ orthogonal to the fantasy of communication.”²⁹

While there are real differences between these three approaches, they should not be exaggerated. All three scholars have clearly acknowledged the important interconnections of the Symbolic, Imaginary, and Real, suggesting that the differences in their work result more from emphasis than fundamental disagreement. The purpose of Lacan’s “Borromean Knot,” a diagram of three interconnected rings in which the links between any two orders are dependent on the integrity of the third, was to demonstrate that these three orders all require one another. Various concepts might belong primarily in one or another of the Symbolic, Real, and Imaginary, but none ultimately can be explained without reference to all three. A thoroughgoing account of anxiety also admits this interdependence and its elaboration; in fact, it helps to further illuminate the importance of their interrelation.

The net of anxiety

Although a Lacanian analysis of anxiety situates the phenomenon at the intersection of the three orders, the most familiar definitions of anxiety are outgrowths of much-maligned “ego psychology” with its focus on the individual psyche and its felt states. As defined in the fifth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual*, anxiety is the “apprehensive anticipation of future danger or misfortune accompanied by a feeling of worry, distress, and/or somatic symptoms of tension.”³⁰ *Campbell’s Psychiatric Dictionary* largely

concurs. Focusing on its bodily expressions, anxiety is to be distinguished from fear. While fear is not characterized by persistent doubt and is “a reaction to real or threatened danger,” anxiety “is more typically a reaction to unreal or imagined danger.”³¹ Anxiety is derived from the Latin word *angere*, which means “to choke,” “restrict,” or “distress” and, thus, not coincidentally, even today it is common to speak of “anxious people,” those who habitually or acutely suffer from the state of anxiety. To speak of “anxious nations,” “anxious times” or, in W. H. Auden’s words, an “age of anxiety” is to extend metaphorically a term essentially meant to describe an individual’s *felt state* or subjective experience—an *emotion*, as both the American Psychological Association and *The Corsini Encyclopedia of Psychology* define it.³²

This individualistic conceptualization of anxiety has a long tradition in rhetoric. A review of the literature conducted by Michael Hyde finds anxiety treated primarily as a barrier to communication, manifested in “reticence,” “stage fright,” “unwillingness-to-communicate,” or “communication apprehension.”³³ This is the fear of public speaking made familiar by the discipline’s historical focus on public speaking. Indeed, speech and psychology developed close links over the last century, beginning with efforts to understand the mental states of orators and the audiences they addressed, often in a way that treated communication as a process of transmitting one person’s thoughts to others. Proper speech delivery, including fluidity and ease, were taken to reflect mental stability, whereas reticence, stage fright, and frustration were interpreted as outward manifestations of inner turmoil.³⁴ Hence, in the main, communication scholars adopted ego psychology’s approach to anxiety as an individual emotional response to external stressors, a felt condition triggered by the occasion of speech but not necessarily determined in all of its forms by the conditions of communication. While it was noted that impediments to “healthy” speech that produce anxiety might lie in the unconscious, this terrain was understood as an individual interiority, a hidden space within the speaker’s mind rather than an externally constituted and constituting field of language.

Over the last few decades, references to anxiety in rhetoric journals tend to use the concept as a passing descriptor rather than a concept in need of rigorous elaboration. The single exception (and the last article devoted to the topic in the *Quarterly Journal of Speech*) is Hyde’s 1980 refiguring of anxiety on Heideggerian grounds. More attentive than his predecessors to aspects of anxiety that exceed individual subjects, Hyde argued for an ontological understanding of the conditions of speech that prefigure subjects to experience the concrete (ontic) feeling of anxiety.³⁵ Although configured as an exploration of speech apprehension, the essay linked it to a larger existentialist interpretation of anxiety, resisting its reduction to an object for social-scientific analysis. However, Hyde’s was not an effort to fundamentally challenge the notion of anxiety as a felt experience afflicting discrete subjects. His Heideggerian interpretation portrayed anxiety as something that “individualizes” Dasein and complicates choice, grasped as “is an individual act.”³⁶

The internalized, emotional, and individuated or atomized interpretation of anxiety may help to describe difficulties with public speaking or an audience member’s discomfort in reaction to a rhetor’s message, but it does not support a strong relationship between rhetoric and anxiety. The ego psychology approach to anxiety reduces its communicative aspects either to symptoms of or triggers for an underlying condition of an individual psyche. Anxiety as an emotion is not inherently more interesting than any number of

other felt states such as happiness, sadness, anger, or jealousy. To paraphrase Edwin Black, its expression would simply amount to a report on the state of the subject's glands.³⁷ To abandon rhetoric's claim on the concept would be unduly hasty, however. Lacan's more nuanced account of anxiety benefits from attention to networks of signification that traverse individual subjects, thereby productively supplementing our understanding of public discourse as fantasy and the affective investments that sustain it. Even more to the point of this essay, Lacan's singular take on anxiety helps to explain how the fantasy structure supporting any given public discourse is brought to crisis. To summarily state the case to be made in the pages that follow: getting too close to the object of desire will wreak havoc upon the basic structure of fantasy.

In the seminar, Lacan links both affect and rhetoric to anxiety in an attempt to explain the latter concept. After identifying anxiety as an affect he writes:

[W]hat I said about affect is that it isn't repressed . . . It's unfastened, it drifts about. It can be found displaced maddened, inverted, or metabolized, but it isn't repressed. What are repressed are the signifiers that moor it. . . .

To leave you with something that preoccupies you, I'll make a simple remark. Where does Aristotle deal best with the passions? . . . It's in the second book of his *Rhetoric*.

The best there is on the passions is caught in the net, the network, of rhetoric. This is not by chance.³⁸

Affect, Lacan insists, is not "repressed." But neither is it "given in its immediacy" nor "the subject in a raw form." And affect is not emotion either, since it forms the network of passions from which a particular subject's emotional state derives. What affect is, Lacan protests, is rhetorical; "the net, the network, or rhetoric" in the place of a *psycho-logy* in which the individual psyche is the prized object. Indeed, at the very start of the seminar Lacan calls attention to rhetoric's contribution to *erotology*, a study of desire that begins not with the felt state of the subject, as in the standard definitions of anxiety noted above, but with the "net" or network of signifiers in which those subjects are caught.³⁹ What does this mean?

At its most basic level, anxiety has to do with the relationship between the subject and the desire of the Other.⁴⁰ There is a distinction for Lacan between other and Other. The other, lowercase "o," is the addressee of speech, the object-signifier to which the subject speaks. This specific other is the object that the speaking subject addresses, a stand-in for the capital-"O" Other of the Symbolic that is the network of tropes and their connective logic.⁴¹ The discourse of the Other, then, is composed of the discourse of specific others, but is more than that: it is the accreted milieu of human *reality*,⁴² the "net" in which subjects are caught. Notably, for Lacan anxiety has less to do with the desire of specific others than with the subject's relation to the desire of the Other. This relation stems from the differentiation of subject and Other in the now infamous mirror stage.

In the mirror stage, the subject is formed by identifying with its reflection. The infant does not initially differentiate strongly between the world and the self. Upon seeing its reflection in the mirror, correlating its motion to the motion of its reflected image, and receiving confirmation from its parents, the infant comes to identify with its specular image. In this way, the mirror image is a reduction of the subject, rendered distinct and unified in/as a signifier capable of participating in the order of the Symbolic.⁴³ The cost of this entry into language is a separation from the Real and an attendant *lack* of access

to it. This lack is the engine of desire. It is a necessary incompleteness that the subject seeks to fill but can never do so, since it is the necessary consequence of the entrance into the Symbolic rather than the absence of a specific object. *Objet a* is the object that promises completion, thus called because its specific character is less significant than its structural function. It is represented for the subject by a series of other, concrete objects in an endless metonymic chain in which the attainment of any *specific* object automatically negates its status as *the* object, leading the subject on down an endless path of metonymic desire, a process called the repetition compulsion or death drive.⁴⁴

As remarked above, in the mirror stage the subject identifies itself with a specular image, a signifier that stands in for the self and is the necessary condition for participation in the Symbolic. Specific others are reduced to objects as well in a kind of doubled reflection: the specular image is reflected again as a means of grasping for the Other which exceeds any particular other. What is missing from this mirrored image is the subject's own lack. The subject's imagination of the Other's desire does not reflect the lack because the subject does not recognize its own desire. The desire of the Other can be treated like an object—something that the subject can court, attract, and attain. The “formula of the fantasy,” Lacan argues, is “that the Other faints, swoons, faced with this object that I am, a deduction I reach on account of being able to behold myself.”⁴⁵ In other words, after conflating the Other with specific others, we treat its desire as an object to be captured. Most notably for the purposes of this article, in order for this fantasy to hold, the Other's desire must not come too close; proximity undermines the conditions for fantasy by revealing the Other's desire as something alien to the subject and outside of its control. The endless quest for an inaccessible object is tragic in the sense that we often find hardship in the search for something that we can never attain. Gunn describes the inability to know the desire of the Other as a “frustration” inherent in the “fundamental fantasy” because what the Other wants in exchange for the lost object is obscure.⁴⁶ But this dynamic is also the foundation for enjoyment. That is to say, this frustration is precisely what sustains desire—it is the inability to know that keeps the subject engaged.

By describing the consequences of getting too much of a good thing, anxiety illustrates how breakdowns in fantasy can occur: proximity to the desired object rather than its loss. It is the distance of an object from the subject that makes it desirable, for it is close proximity that renders each thing mundane, or even horrific, and therefore incapable of filling desire. The more one “approaches, encircles, and caresses what [one] believes to be the object” of desire, “the more [one] is in fact diverted and distracted from it. . . . The further [one] goes,” the more one “wants to preserve, maintain and protect” the image of the object.⁴⁷ What Lacan, after Freud, calls *cathexis*⁴⁸ or affective investment in fantasy requires the lack to function. It therefore requires sufficient proximity for the object to appear within reach, but enough distance to conceal its insufficiency as an answer to the lack. This function is illustrated in the *fort-da* game described by Freud. The game was played by a boy of Freud's acquaintance who had a wooden reel attached to a string that he would throw over his curtained cot, making it “gone” (*fort*). Then he would pull the spool back into view, rejoicing that it was “there” (*da*), and repeat the game. This game of to-and-fro typically has been read as the child inuring himself against the potential absence of his mother. However, Lacan's reading of it locates enjoyment not in the conditions of “gone” or “here” but in the exercise of control over the

conditions of presence and absence—the game being essentially a simulation that permits control in a situation in which the child has no agency.⁴⁹

For the purposes of this essay, it is important to notice that anxiety arises when the *fort-da* game is disrupted by the sudden, uncanny presence of the Other's desire: when the object representing it to the subject becomes too close. As an "exercise in mastery," *fort-da* requires that "a certain void is always to be preserved, which has nothing to do with the content, neither positive nor negative, of the demand. The disruption wherein anxiety is evinced arises when this void is totally filled in."⁵⁰ Taking the mother's breast as a classic example of the lost object, Lacan insists that anxiety is not "the signal of the lack" but "the failing of the support that lack provides." He explains:

Don't you know that it's not longing for the maternal breast that provokes anxiety, but its imminence? What provokes anxiety is everything that announces to us, that lets us glimpse, that we're going to be taken back onto the lap. It is not, contrary to what is said, the rhythm of the mother's alternating presence and absence. The proof of this is that the infant revels in repeating this game of presence and absence. The security of presence is the possibility of absence. The most anguishing thing for the infant is precisely the moment when the relationship upon which he's established himself, of the lack that turns him into desire, is disrupted . . . when there's no possibility of any lack.⁵¹

In other words, when the subject, imagining itself as the fulfillment of the Other's desire, must confront the immediacy of that desire, no space remains for fantasy because suddenly something appears which represents the Other's desire in a form inconsistent with it.⁵² The specific character of that *something* does not matter. "I say *something*," Lacan stated, "you should understand *anything whatsoever*."⁵³ The subject's distance from the Other's desire appears to dissipate and the question "What does the Other want of me?" becomes that much more urgent and unsettling. Lacan proceeds to suggest that anxiety, "of all signals, is the one that does not deceive," but instead signals the incursion of the Real, disrupting fantasy and making the subject aware that something exists beyond the neat predictability of the Symbolic order.⁵⁴ In Slavoj Žižek's terms, the gap that separates an object of desire from one of disgust is "the very gap that separates reality from the Real: what constitutes reality is the minimum of idealization the subject needs in order to be able to sustain the horror of the Real."⁵⁵ The object's imminence disrupts the economy of trope and affective investment that give rise to fantasy and underpin specific subjectivities by eliminating the "possibility of absence" that is the "security of presence."⁵⁶

The net of interrelated tropes in which anxiety operates is the Lacanian unconscious.⁵⁷ One of Lacan's primary innovations was his recognition that the unconscious is not an interior phenomenon that guides subjects unbeknownst to them, but instead constitutes an exterior network that creates the conditions for speech, imagination, and fantasy so thoroughly that the operations of these tropes are generally unexamined by the subjects through which they work. Lacan's unconscious is more akin to Kenneth Burke's "unending conversation"—in that the network of language precedes and prefigures any specific subject caught within it—than it is to Carl Jung's collective unconscious where a set of primal archetypes transcendently determines human experience.⁵⁸ One key difference is affect. As Lundberg argues, tropes are durable due to affective investment, but they are not inevitable as organizing phenomena. A strong investment in some tropes conceals the operation of others by overshadowing them.⁵⁹ When the object looms close, other

tropes recede. Repression thus functions not as an internal mechanism in which the super-ego suppresses some desire in the psyche, but as an essentially rhetorical operation in the Symbolic. To extend Burke's metaphor, it as if one spends hours fantasizing and bragging about the clever things one would say if a mortal enemy shows up, only to be stunned into silence when said enemy actually walks through the door, surrounded by friends still present but momentarily forgotten. In anxiety, the unhinging of the fantasy relation disrupts the affective investments sustained in *fort-da* by making the object seem too horribly present to wish away.

With this approach to anxiety in mind, the distinction between affect and emotion can be clarified. Affect is not a state but rather the transformation between one state and another, the possibility of being influenced by something else that is the condition of possibility for emotion but not reducible to it.⁶⁰ Thus affect is not internal to the subject but something between subjects that makes *cathexis* possible, and through it, the investments that sustain an economy of tropes that structure both subjects and their fantasies. Lacan makes this clear in the context of anxiety by noting that, as an element of communication, it is a collective phenomenon that influences individual members of a group, something that spreads among subjects but is not reducible to them. "If anxiety is a signal," he writes:

it can come from someone else . . . the universal, individual, and collective are situated at one and the same level. What is true at the individual level, this internal danger, is also true at the collective level. The danger that is internal to the subject is the same as the danger that is internal to the herd.⁶¹

The affective network of anxiety thus creates the conditions for the mistrust, confusion, and uncertainty felt by anxious subjects, but it is not reducible to any one of them. In the context of Jade Helm, the right-wing fantasy of a tyrannical government takeover began to unravel because the exercise signaled to some that government takeover was no longer a hypothetical possibility but an imminent threat. The exact details of Jade Helm do not matter because the object that approaches in anxiety "takes the value of all signifiers," as Lacan put it.⁶² It does not matter whether the exercise is "really" a government plot because its import is structural, producing anxiety by *seeming* to reveal the Other's desire and close the distance by which the fantasy can be sustained. If "trope" retains its ancient sense of "turn," then "anxiety" still implies "restriction": in anxiety, there appears to be no room to turn, and the support of fantasy collapses. In this sense, Congressman Louie Gohmert was more spooked sheep than lone wolf: what his statement indicates is the breakdown of the fantasy of the Other's desire in its sudden proximity and the resultant panic for those invested in it.

What does Obama want of me?

On May 5, 2015, Gohmert—one time Texas jurist, former Army captain, and current Tea Party Republican representing Texas's First District in the United States Congress—released a statement criticizing the planned Jade Helm exercises scheduled to begin on June 15. He questioned the administration's motives and how they were revealed in the rhetorical choice to label some states "hostile" and others "permissive" for the purpose of the exercise:

I was rather appalled that the hostile areas amazingly have a Republican majority, ‘cling to their guns and religion,’ and believe in the sanctity of the United States Constitution. When the federal government begins, even in practice, games or exercises, to consider any U.S. city or state in ‘hostile’ control and trying to retake it, the message becomes extremely . . . suspicious.⁶³

Gohmert’s statement was immediately picked up by conservative media outlets, especially those on the Internet, where it generated considerable attention. The following day it was quoted at length on Infowars.com, a website largely responsible for the early hype surrounding Jade Helm.⁶⁴ Gohmert’s press release also prompted a *Breitbart* story emphasizing the Congressman’s military service and legal experience⁶⁵ and prompted a response by the nonprofit Right Wing Watch two weeks later.⁶⁶ Polling data and official action by Texas Governor Greg Abbot provide further evidence that Jade Helm had a significant effect on the political climate.

“Over the past few weeks,” Gohmert wrote, “my office has been inundated with calls referring to the Jade Helm 15 military exercise This military practice has some concerned that the U.S. Army is preparing for modern-day martial law.”⁶⁷ This claim was consistent with increasing buzz around Jade Helm and the gradually escalating series of conspiracy theories attached to it, including the accusations against Walmart, FEMA, NASA, and the Army cited previously. Gohmert aligned himself with the constituents who had “inundated” his office, writing that he “could understand these concerns.” He claimed that “leaders within the current administration” had used their government positions to “persecute people with conservative beliefs in God, country, and notions such as honor and self-reliance.”⁶⁸

Much like the evangelical Christian publics who, as Lundberg deftly explains at length, constitute their identity around persecution by a hostile public engaged in a culture war against them, Gohmert’s statement appealed to constituencies who take enjoyment in the fantasy of persecution. Evangelical Christians in Texas are clearly included by Gohmert’s reference to “conservative beliefs in God.” However, he widens his rhetoric’s appeal by adding to it elements that serve as points of attachment for other conservative publics as well. His reference to the persecution of those who believe in “self-reliance” is particularly significant. A good deal of early apprehension about Jade Helm was sustained by “doomsday preppers,” a loosely organized public, generally right-wing, professing belief in the inevitability of some kind of apocalyptic mishap and the need to be prepared for survival and rebuilding. Communities of doomsday preppers on the Internet, both on social media platforms such as Facebook and on dedicated websites, often anticipate the imposition of martial law and prepare specifically for that event.⁶⁹

Prior to Jade Helm, some preppers were already concerned that the federal government was—or soon would be—persecuting them by forcing them to live “on the grid” or by outlawing survival practices such as rainwater collection.⁷⁰ Infowars.com had claimed that the American government planned to treat preppers “like terrorists.”⁷¹ Not surprisingly, wildly popular prepper-oriented fiction such as *One Second After* and *Patriot Dawn* routinely combines mistrust of government, the inevitability of catastrophe, and right-wing political outlooks. Because many preppers are also conservative Christians, the intermingling of these memes is especially powerful.⁷² Government crackdown, persecution, and apocalyptic threat form a metonymic network sustained by repeated *cathexes* rather than by any essential consubstantiality. This network forms the “context for the

context” of Gohmert’s text—not simply the immediate circumstances of the statement but the set of investments into which Gohmert’s speech intervenes and is operative among preppers, evangelicals, and other conservatives.⁷³

The dynamic of *fort-da* and its interruption helps us to make sense of the “context for the context,” Gohmert’s anxious relation to Jade Helm, and to account for its resonance with survivalists and conspiracy theorists. Survivalism itself is a game of *fort-da*. Prepping is above all else an exercise in repetition or, more specifically, the reiteration of a set of routines punctuated by purchasing, storing, and practicing to “bug out” or defend one’s homestead. These activities are enjoyable in the Lacanian sense: they serve as sites for affective attachment. Indeed preppers play a dreadfully serious game in which they fantasize about the activation of martial law and prepare for it. Reality television shows and Internet social media communities are rife with preppers who clearly enjoy imagining what they will do when the world ends, often practicing intricate plans or fixating on one particular threat as a personal favorite. For Gohmert’s audience, the persecution of preppers and the government takeover are enjoyed in the same structural sense that the infant enjoys *fort-da*. The notion that the federal government cannot tolerate the prepper community’s independence and is bent on controlling it is a fantasy of being wanted by the Other. Prepping cannot be tolerated, so the fantasy runs, because the Other is driven to possess the prepper and cannot be whole while these independent spirits defy it. It was only when Jade Helm threatened to break this alternation by actually asserting the government’s presence that the fantasy ceased to be enjoyable for some.⁷⁴ Notably, however, it is not Barack Obama himself who suddenly materializes the Other’s obscene desire. As Atilla Halsby has argued, the American president can function as a kind of synecdoche, not a part for the whole, but a repository for various “parts,” “materializ[ing] the impossible but insistent demand for representing the social w(hole).”⁷⁵ The specific other of Barack Obama, never named in Gohmert’s statement, stands in for the “social w(hole)” of the Other. Hence, criticism of the president is enthymematic: Gohmert’s use of words like “concern,” “leery,” and “suspicious” in connection with the “leaders within the current administration” draws on the prepping community’s habitual suspicion of Obama personally and the federal government more generally.

Gohmert’s objections and proposed remedies were based almost entirely on specific signifiers. He claims to be “appalled” that some states in the exercise were specifically identified and described as “hostile.” “Such labeling tends to make people who have grown leery of federal government overreach become suspicious” of “their big brother government.”⁷⁶ The fantasy of persecution is suddenly “too real,” which is to say a particular “we” is forced to acknowledge that it is an object for the Other—and not necessarily an object of love. As Lacan puts it, desire “exiles me from my subjectivity, by deciding on its own all the signifiers to which this subjectivity is attached.”⁷⁷ Jade Helm’s supposed imposition of martial law appears where there should be no-thing,⁷⁸ the lack, and signals a Real order of the Other’s desire, one that is both too close for comfort and incomprehensible in the terms of the fantasy. The Other’s distance, formerly a space for fantasy, erodes in the signifier of Jade Helm, paradoxically creating a different kind of uncertainty: anxiety. Louie Gohmert, Ted Cruz, Chuck Norris, and Greg Abbott all wanted to ask more questions because their reality had been challenged by Jade Helm. The defining question for anxiety is thus: What does the Other want of me?

Gohmert's press release on Jade Helm did not contain any particularly shocking information. To the contrary, it contained little information of any sort. As has been the case with a good number of conspiracy theories, the furor over Jade Helm derived more from uncertainty and inference than from any hard evidence. Gohmert offered no proof that Jade Helm was a move towards the persecution of conservatives and the imposition of martial law because none existed. He did not put forward an argument and evidence to persuade his audience that the federal government meant to revoke civil liberties, and then try to organize for action. What he did, however, was activate a net of signifiers, sustained by affective investment with material effects, for tens of thousands of anxious conspiracy theorists. The gravity of Gohmert's rhetoric must not, then, be attributed to its argument but to its claim's particular relation with a broader network of symbolic associations, a relation that hampered these subjects' ability to enjoy by making the object in their fantasy appear too close. The terror of their Real is not that the government's labeling of hostile states reveals its plans and their insidious motives, but rather that Jade Helm appears to signal the threatening proximity of the Other's desire. The signifiers invoked by Gohmert did not need to transmit anything at all. They only needed to impose the dangerous proximity of the Other's desire.

Conclusion: When things get real

The central purpose of this essay is to illustrate how rhetoricians might profitably reclaim the concept of anxiety. It takes Jade Helm as its brief case study. Unfortunately, the real aftermath of Jade Helm lends urgency to this theoretical and critical project. While mainstream media outlets tend to portray Jade Helm conspiracies as a joke, their consequences are hardly funny. In August, two unnamed Mississippi men fired on U.S. soldiers from a vehicle before driving away.⁷⁹ On another occasion, Walter Eugene Litteral and two other men were indicted in North Carolina, a federal investigation alleging that they had been stockpiling ammunition and making grenades in anticipation of a violent confrontation with the U.S. Army. The three men were arrested for conspiring to kill military personnel by luring them into a trap and attacking them with firearms and explosives. The story was reported online in the local *Gaston Gazette*, where the only three comments posted praised Litteral and his accomplices, decried the lack of support for their actions, and criticized them for cooperating with the Feds.⁸⁰

On the same day that Louie Gohmert sounded the alarm about Jade Helm, another Texas congressman tried to quell the public's misgivings. Randy Neugebauer, who describes himself as "one of the most conservative members of Congress," issued a statement titled "Addressing Concerns and Rumors About Jade Helm 15" declaring that "this training exercise is NOT implementing martial law or a military takeover of the state of Texas by the federal government."⁸¹ Less than a week later, the website FactCheck.org, run by the Annenberg Public Policy Center, provided a lengthy, calm refutation of Jade Helm conspiracy theories, adding to the list of government denials.⁸² Most Jade Helm theories contained obvious logical flaws and a complete dearth of reliable evidence. Still, polling data and Internet chatter suggest that efforts to reassure the public largely have failed. The unconscious economy from which anxiety derives suggests why: not only is denial a necessary characteristic of conspiracy theories, but conspiracy theories are made durable by cathectic investments, not well-reasoned deliberation.

It is perhaps too messianic a role for communication scholars to predict and prevent acts of violence, but the necessary precondition for productive responses to the sometimes lethal politics of the far right is to understand how its affective network is pinned together. Mapping anxiety as a rhetorical phenomenon is a step in this direction and, as this essay has tried to demonstrate, Lacan's retheorization of anxiety can contribute usefully to that scholarship. Because ultraconservative narratives are sustained by the displacements of desire and fantasy, responses based on orderly, reasoned refutation are likely to remain of limited use. Instead of refuting the content of these messages, scholars of rhetoric might play a role by helping to reveal the networks of investment that structure fantasies and make them actionable. Locating anxiety in a network of signifiers rather than in the hidden interiority of individuals also allows critics to place anxious subjects in a larger social and political context. Doing so requires that we attend to both how fantasies are maintained by the enjoyment of *fort-da* and how they break down in proximity to their object.

Acknowledgments

Calum L. Matheson is Assistant Professor of Public Deliberation and Civic life in the Communication Department at the University of Pittsburgh and Director of the William Pitt Debating Union. The author would like to thank Tim Barouch, Eric English, Paul Johnson, Chris Lundberg, and both anonymous reviewers for their comments and support.

Notes

1. United States Army Special Operations Command Public Affairs Office, "PRESS RELEASE: Exercise readies SOF for threats abroad," March 25, 2015, accessed Sep 9, 2015 http://www.army.mil/article/145143/PRESS_RELEASE__Exercise_readies_SOF_for_threats_abroad/
2. US Army Special Operations Command, "Request to Conduct Realistic Military Training (RMT) JADE HELM 15," no date, accessed October 1, 2015, <https://assets.documentcloud.org/documents/1695249/258605525-jade-helm-martial-law-ww3-prep.pdf>
3. See, for example, "Are The Wal-Mart Closings In Jade Helm 15 States A Sign We've Sold Them The Rope They'll Use To Hang Us With By Shopping At Wal-Mart All These Years?" *All News Pipeline*, April 14, 2015, accessed October 1, 2015, http://allnewspipeline.com/What_Martial_Law_Will_Look_Like.php; Dave Hodges, "World War III, Walmart, FEMA Camps, Jade Helm: A Clergy Response Team Insider Reveals What Lies Ahead," *The Common Sense Show*, June 21, 2015, accessed October 1, 2015, <http://www.thecommonsenseshow.com/2015/06/21/world-war-iii-walmart-fema-camps-jade-helm-a-clergy-response-team-insider-reveals-what-lies-ahead/>
4. Paul Helsinki, "Jade Helm Update: It's About Mass Extinction Event Coming 2015," *Guns America News and Reviews*, May 31, 2015, accessed October 1, 2015, <http://www.gunsamerica.com/blog/jade-helm-geoengineering-extinction-event-2015/>
5. Dave Hodges, "The Frightening Third Purpose of Jade Helm," *The Common Sense Show*, June 11, 2015, accessed October 1, 2015, <http://www.thecommonsenseshow.com/2015/06/11/the-frightening-third-purpose-of-jade-helm/>
6. Dalia Mae, "Mastering the Human Domain (Jade Helm and Artificial Intelligence)," *Gumshoe News*, September 4, 2015, accessed October 1, 2015, <http://gumshoenews.com/2015/09/03/mastering-the-human-domain-jade-helm-and-artificial-intelligence/>
7. Sorcha Faal, "Jade Helm-15 War Exercise Linked To Nordic Alien UFO's Invading Texas," *WhatDoesItMean.com*, July 9, 2015, accessed October 8, 2015, <http://www.whatdoesitmean.com/index1887.htm>

8. Chuck Baldwin, "Operation Jade Helm: Should We Be Worried?" *Chuck Baldwin Live*, April 2, 2015, accessed October 1, 2015, <http://chuckbaldwinlive.com/Articles/tabid/109/ID/3304/Operation-Jade-Helm-Should-We-Be-Worried.aspx>
9. Peggy Fikac, "Abbott's first response to Jade Helm more measured, records show," *San Antonio Express News*, May 28, 2015, accessed October 1, 2015, <http://www.expressnews.com/news/local/article/Abbott-s-first-response-to-Jade-Helm-more-6293173.php>
10. Chuck Norris, "Jade Helm 15, Crime Stoppers and KSK," *World News Daily*, May 3 2015, accessed October 1, 2015, <http://www.wnd.com/2015/05/jade-helm-15-crime-stoppers-and-ksk/#y2fBBITHf5GDZiE4.99>
11. Louie Gohmert, "Gohmert Statement on Jade Helm Exercises," May 5, 2015, accessed October 1, 2015, <http://gohmert.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=398216>
12. "Voters Worry Military Exercises May Lead to Federal Control Of States," Rasmussen Reports, May 12, 2015, accessed October 1, 2015, http://www.rasmussenreports.com/public_content/politics/general_politics/may_2015/voters_worry_military_exercises_may_lead_to_federal_control_of_states
13. "NASA: There is No Asteroid Threatening Earth," *National Aeronautics and Space Administration*, August 19, 2015, accessed October 1, 2015, <https://www.nasa.gov/jpl/nasa-there-is-no-asteroid-threatening-earth>; Ahiza Garcia, "Wal-Mart: 'No Truth To The Rumors' Of Tunnels Being Built To Take Over Texas," *TPM*, May 4, 2015, accessed October 1, 2015, <http://talkingpointsmemo.com/livewire/wal-mart-jade-helm-15>; "Army war simulation in Texas sparks fear, response from governor," *CBS News*, April 29, 2015, accessed October 1, 2015, <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/jade-helm-15-army-war-simulation-in-texas-sparks-fear-response-from-governor/>
14. Jim Henson, "Public Opinion And Governor Abbott's Choices On Operation Jade Helm 15," *The Texas Politics Project*, April 29, 2015, accessed October 1, 2015, <http://texaspolitics.utexas.edu/blog/public-opinion-and-governor-abbotts-choices-operation-jade-helm-15>
15. "Ted Cruz Says He Has Asked the Pentagon for Answers on Jade Helm 15," *Bloomberg Politics*, May 2, 2015, accessed October 1, 2015, <http://www.bloomberg.com/politics/articles/2015-05-02/ted-cruz-says-he-has-asked-the-pentagon-for-answers-on-jade-helm-15>
16. "Cruz supports federal relief for Texas floods; voted against Hurricane Sandy funding," *Washington Post*, May 29, 2015, accessed October 1, 2015, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2015/05/29/cruz-supports-federal-relief-for-texas-floods-voted-against-hurricane-sandy-funding/>
17. Agnes Heller, *A Theory of Feelings* 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009), 75.
18. Michael Hyde, "The Experience of Anxiety: A Phenomenological Investigation," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 66, no. 2 (1980): 140. Even Hyde's more sophisticated study concentrates on how anxiety "individualizes" subjects, turning them inward towards their own subjective experiences.
19. Jesse Walker, "The truth behind Jade Helm 15 conspiracy theories," *Los Angeles Times*, May 6, 2015, accessed October 1, 2015, <http://www.latimes.com/opinion/op-ed/la-oe-walker-jade-helm-conspiracies-20150507-story.html> (emphasis mine).
20. Christian Lundberg, *Lacan in Public: Psychoanalysis and the Science of Rhetoric* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2012), 23.
21. Lundberg, *Lacan in Public*, 84.
22. Barbara Biesecker, "Rhetorical Studies and the 'New' Psychoanalysis: What's the Real Problem? or Framing the Problem of the Real," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 84, no. 2 (1998): 224.
23. Biesecker, "Rhetorical Studies," 238.
24. Barbara Biesecker, "Prospects of Rhetoric for the Twenty-First Century: Speculations on Eventual Rhetoric Ending with a Note on Barack Obama and a Benediction by Jacques Lacan," in *Reengaging the Prospects of Rhetoric: Current Conversations and Contemporary Challenges*, ed. Mark J. Porrovecchio (New York: Routledge, 2010), 26–27.

25. Joshua Gunn, "Refitting Fantasy: Psychoanalysis, Subjectivity, and Talking to the Dead." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 90, no. 1 (2004): 2.
26. Christian Lundberg, "The Royal Road Not Taken: Joshua Gunn's 'Refitting Fantasy: Psychoanalysis, Subjectivity and Talking to the Dead' and Lacan's Symbolic Order," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 90, no. 4 (2004): 496.
27. Lundberg, "Royal Road," 499.
28. Lundberg, *Lacan in Public*, 87.
29. Michael Kaplan, "Lacan in Public: Psychoanalysis and the Science of Rhetoric by Christian Lundberg (review)." *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 47, no. 3 (2014): 336.
30. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 5th ed., ed. American Psychiatric Association, 2013, accessed October 1, 2015, <http://dsm.psychiatryonline.org/doi/full/10.1176/appi.books.9780890425596.GlossaryofTechnicalTerms>
31. Campbell, Robert, *Campbell's Psychiatric Dictionary*, 8th ed. (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2004), 46.
32. "Anxiety," American Psychological Association, 2015 accessed October 1, 2015, <http://www.apa.org/topics/anxiety/>; *The Corsini Encyclopedia of Psychology*, 4th ed., eds. Irving Weiner and W. Edward Craighead (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2010), 131.
33. Hyde, 140.
34. Pat Gehrke, *The Ethics and Politics of Speech : Communication and Rhetoric in the Twentieth Century* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2009), 21–32.
35. Hyde, 142.
36. Hyde, 147.
37. Edwin Black, *Rhetorical Criticism a Study in Method* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978), 7.
38. Jacques Lacan, *Anxiety: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book X*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. A.R. Price (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2014), 14.
39. Lacan, *Anxiety*, 14–15.
40. Lacan, *Anxiety*, 6.
41. Lundberg, *Lacan in Public*, 60–5.
42. "Reality" refers to the fabric of social mediation and language that *stands in* for a mind-independent world with which it does not perfectly correspond, but for which it is often misrecognized. This is distinct for the order of the Real, which is best understood as the realization that the world exists in excess of language when the function of the Symbolic is disrupted, and that the order of this Symbolic can therefore not fully tame the contingency of the seemingly chaotic world.
43. Jacques Lacan, "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the I Function as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience," in *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006), 76–80. As is true of almost everything in Lacan's teaching, the mirror stage need not be taken literally as a universal event in childhood requiring a baby and a mirror. It is best understood as an example illustrating the ongoing process of subject formation and not a discrete developmental stage.
44. Todd McGowan, *Enjoying What We Don't Have: The Political Project of Psychoanalysis* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2013), 13–14.
45. Lacan, *Anxiety*, 49.
46. Gunn, "Refitting Fantasy," 10.
47. Lacan, *Anxiety*, 41.
48. The Freudian term *cathexis* refers to a subject's attachment to an object, often to a point "beyond the pleasure principle" where attachment becomes destructive. Its use here is meant to be synonymous with Lundberg's "affective investment," but can hopefully avoid some of the confusion about how the many different commentators on "affect" use that term.
49. Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, trans. James Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1961), 16–17.
50. Lacan, *Anxiety*, 65.
51. Lacan, *Anxiety*, 53.

52. The role of the object distinguishes Lacan's theory of anxiety from Freud's. Anxiety does not lack an object, but is rather "not without an object," meaning that the object is displaced or obscure, always elsewhere. See Lacan, *Anxiety*, 89.
53. Lacan, *Anxiety*, 41.
54. Lacan, *Anxiety*, 160.
55. Slavoj Žižek, *The Plague of Fantasies* (London: Verso, 2008), 83.
56. Lacan, *Anxiety*, 53.
57. Lundberg, *Lacan in Public*, 36–39.
58. Kenneth Burke, *The Philosophy of Literary Form* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1973), 110–11.
59. Lundberg, *Lacan in Public*, 52–3.
60. Gilles Deleuze, "Gilles Deleuze, Lecture Transcripts on Spinoza's Concept of Affect," 1978, accessed February 18, 2016, http://www.gold.ac.uk/media/images-by-section/departments/research-centres-and-units/research-centres/centre-for-the-study-of-invention/deleuze_spinoza_affect.pdf
61. Lacan, *Transference*, 367.
62. Jacques Lacan, *Transference*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Bruce Fink (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2015), 366.
63. Gohmert.
64. Kit Daniels, "Rep. Gohmert on Jade Helm: We Never Named a State 'Hostile,'" *Infowars.com*, May 6, 2015, accessed October 1, 2015, <http://www.infowars.com/rep-gohmert-on-jade-helm-we-never-named-a-state-hostile/>
65. Rob Milford, "Louie Gohmert, 'I Can Understand These Concerns' About Jade Helm 15," *Breitbart.com*, May 6, 2015, accessed October 1, 2015, <http://www.breitbart.com/texas/2015/05/06/louie-gohmert-i-can-understand-these-concerns-about-jade-helm-15/>
66. Brian Tashman, "Louie Gohmert Once Again Fuels Jade Helm 15 Fears," *Right Wing Watch*, May 19, 2015, accessed October 1, 2015, <http://www.rightwingwatch.org/content/louie-gohmert-once-again-fuels-jade-helm-15-fears>. A Google search done on September 26, 2015 revealed around 26,000 results for "Gohmert Jade Helm," while a similar search on Bing reported slightly over two million results.
67. Gohmert.
68. Gohmert.
69. Examples include: M.D. Creekmore, "Six examples of federal government overreach as we move toward a total takeover of individual and states rights," *The Survivalist Blog*, March 6, 2015, accessed October 1, 2015, <http://www.thesurvivalistblog.net/six-examples-of-federal-government-overreach-as-we-move-toward-a-total-take-over-of-individual-and-states-rights/>; Mark Slavo, "Executive Doomsday Order: Obama Authorizes Gov to Seize Farms, Food, Processing Plants, Energy Resources, Transportation, Skilled Laborers During National Emergency," *SHTFPlan.com*, March 18, 2012, accessed October 1, 2015, http://www.shtfplan.com/headline-news/executive-doomsday-order-obama-authorizes-gov-to-seize-farms-food-processing-plants-energy-resources-transportation-skilled-laborers-during-national-emergency_03182012; "Martial Law: What You Need to Know to Survive," *Survival Life*, December 18, 2014, accessed September 23, 2015, <http://survivalife.com/2014/12/18/martial-law-how-to-survive/>
70. Popular survivalist blogger Michael Snyder has consistently advanced this claim. See: Michael Snyder, "All Over America Government Control Freaks Are Forcing Preppers Back On To The Grid," *End of the American Dream*, June 18, 2012, accessed October 1, 2015, <http://endoftheamericandream.com/archives/all-over-america-government-control-freaks-are-forcing-preppers-back-on-to-the-grid>; Michael Snyder, "All Over America, Government Officials Are Cracking Down On Preppers," *The Economic Collapse Blog*, January 8, 2015, accessed September 23, 2015, <http://theeconomiccollapseblog.com/archives/america-government-officials-cracking-down-preppers>

71. Melissa Melton, "National Guard Whistleblower: 'Doomsday Preppers Will Be Treated As Terrorists,'" *Infowars.com*, October 25, 2012, accessed October 1, 2015, <http://www.infowars.com/national-guard-whistleblower-doomsday-preppers-will-be-treated-as-terrorists/>
72. Various examples are found on *The Armageddon Times*. <http://thearmageddontimes.com/>
73. Lundberg, *Lacan in Public*, 39.
74. For a discussion of the necessary elements of conspiracy fantasies including the need for the conspirator's motives to be opaque, see G. Thomas Goodnight and John Poulakos, "Conspiracy Rhetoric: From Pragmatism to Fantasy in Public Discourse," *Western Journal of Speech Communication* 45, no. 4 (1981): 310–16. For a discussion of prepping as fantasy rather than fear for survival, see Richard Mitchell, *Dancing at Armageddon: Survivalism and Chaos in Modern Times* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 210–12.
75. Atilla Halsby, "Imagine There's No President: The Rhetorical Secret and the Exposure of Valerie Plame," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 101, no. 2 (2015): 364.
76. Gohmert.
77. Lacan, *Anxiety*, 48.
78. Recall that, while ego psychology distinguishes anxiety from fear based on the lack of a specific object in anxiety, Lacan argues that anxiety is "not without an object" in the sense that the specific object that appears in the place of the Other's desire does not matter, but that *petit objet a* is still the genesis of this dynamic. See Lacan, *Anxiety*, 89.
79. "2 Men Open Fire On Soldiers At Jade Helm Training Site In Mississippi," *TPM*, August 4, 2015, accessed September 30, 2015, <http://talkingpointsmemo.com/news/two-men-open-fire-mississippi-military-facility>
80. Diane Turbyfill, "Anti-gov't conspiracy suspects indicted; 2 plead guilty," *Gaston Gazette* (NC), September 18, 2015, accessed September 30, 2015, <http://www.gastongazette.com/article/20150917/NEWS/150918921/?Start=2>
81. Randy Neugebauer, "Addressing Concerns and Rumors About Jade Helm 15," *Texas GOP Vote*, May 6, 2015, accessed September 30, 2015, <http://www.texasgopvote.com/security/addressing-concerns-and-rumors-about-jade-helm-15-007767>
82. D'Angelo Gore, "Jade Helm Not Martial Law," *FactCheck.org*, May 11, 2015, accessed September 30, 2015. <http://www.factcheck.org/2015/05/jade-helm-not-martial-law/>